

Preliminary Results  
SHHH Mobile Phone Survey  
September 2002

The survey was posted on the SHHH web site for six days in September 2002.

554 people responded by the deadline. (Not all respondents answered all questions. Where percentages are given, they refer to the percentage of respondents who answered a specific question.)

67% were hearing aid wearers (51% use two hearing aids,) and 30% cochlear implantees (8% use both a cochlear implant and hearing aid.)

78% said their hearing health care provider did not discuss hearing aid immunity at the time of purchase. Because immunity is such an important issue today, we encourage hearing health providers to be prepared to discuss it with their clients. Since the date of manufacture of hearing aids in the survey ranged from 1985-2002, we can appreciate that immunity from interference with digital telephones was not such an issue with older models of hearing aids as it is today.

75% reported their hearing aids and/or cochlear implants were equipped with telecoils. This is higher than the national average of 30%. We interpret this to be because the consumers visiting the SHHH website are more likely to be educated about hearing loss and the benefits of a telecoil; they may also be more likely to have more severe hearing losses. (Cochlear implants equipped with telecoils are very new and have been introduced by one manufacturer only; we estimate the majority of telecoil users wear hearing aids.)

63% (336 respondents) said they use mobile phones. Of the 198 who do not use mobile phones, 42% had not found one that they could use; 13% thought they could not use them because they assumed all digital phones were incompatible with hearing aids or cochlear implants; and 17% said they are too expensive.

87% of the non-users were interested in buying a mobile phone they could use. Only 8% said they were willing to buy phones costing more than \$250; another 8% were willing to buy the phone only if it was under \$250. 21% need the phone to cost less than \$175, 26% less than \$75, and 24% would only get a mobile phone if they are free with a

commitment to a service plan. (The general population has access to free mobile phones with year-long commitments.)

73% of the mobile phone users stated that the salespeople they encountered were not knowledgeable about mobile phones for people with hearing loss

The most commonly used service providers are Verizon Wireless 30%, AT&T 21%, and Cingular 15%. 11% of respondents use Sprint PCS. We believe the popularity of Verizon Wireless may be due to its use of CDMA which seems to cause less interference, and the availability of analog service. (Sprint, which also uses CDMA, does not provide analog service itself, resulting in higher fees for using analog). 44% of the respondents reported using a CDMA service provider. The move away from CDMA and analog services will cause increasing problems to hearing aid and cochlear implant users.

Mobile phone users were asked how they listen on the phone, and had an option to choose more than one method. The most popular way to listen on the phone (157 people) was with the hearing aid on microphone setting, followed by with the telecoil setting (97 people); 68 people use their unaided ear, 56 use accessories designed for people with hearing loss, 19 use accessories designed for the general population, and 19 use the phone on the speaker phone setting.

66 respondents said they need to use an accessory in order to use the phone. Only 33% of the respondents reported being satisfied with the way the mobile phone sounds with their hearing aid/CI. The rest were dissatisfied (21%), somewhat dissatisfied (12%), neutral (10%), and somewhat satisfied (24%).

Based on 205 respondents who attempted to use their telecoil with the mobile phone, one third (70) experienced no or very little interference using the telecoil setting. 66% (135) experience a range of some to too much interference using the telecoil setting in their hearing aid/cochlear implant.